

Costly "Turkey" Should Be Cut, Not Head Start, Health Centers,

Cops, and Firefighters

February 15, 2010

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington, DC) – The continuing resolution (the Fiscal Year Continuing Appropriations Act for FY2011, H.R. 1, known as the "CR") to fund the federal government through the end of September 2011 is being debated in Congress today and Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) has introduced an amendment that would cut funding for a helicopter/airplane hybrid that has underperformed and proven extremely costly over its quarter-century of development. At a time when community health centers, the Head Start program, student financial aid, police, firefighters and other crucial investments are facing severe cuts, Rep. Gutierrez said the Pentagon must also tighten its belt. The cut to the V-22 program proposed by Rep. Gutierrez could save \$415 million in the current fiscal year.

"The Republicans say their proposal makes 'tough choices,' but this turkey should be a no-brainer," Rep. Gutierrez said of his proposed amendment. "Cutting health care for women and children and slashing Head Start and community health centers should be the last cuts we make, not the first, especially when we are buying multi-million dollar airplanes that don't fly like

they're supposed to."

Rep. Gutierrez said the Republican proposal being considered would make steep cuts in the Head Start program for preschoolers that pays-off down the line in reduced education and criminal justice costs and more tax-revenue from a more educated workforce. Similarly, cutting more than \$5 billion from Federal Pell Grants as proposed by the Republicans will reduce financial aid for 61,000 students in Illinois and 1.4 million students nationally. Unless the bill is amended, the COPS and SAFER programs will also lose money, which could result in 1,330 fewer police and 2,400 fewer firefighters on America's streets.

"Experts say the cuts will eliminate 127 new community health centers funded by the Recovery Act nationwide that are the frontline for preventive health care in many Chicago neighborhoods, in rural communities, and will hit women and children the hardest," the Congressman said. "That short-sighted budget choice threatens the public health of the nation and is the definition of a 'pound-foolish' cut that will cost us in the long run."

"Former Vice President and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney -- who hasn't met many defense programs he doesn't like -- tried to kill the V-22 program four times, so you get a sense for just how wasteful, unnecessary, and unsuccessful this airplane is," Rep. Gutierrez said.

"The Pentagon's top weapons tester from 1994-2001 said the V-22 would be safe, 'if used like a truck, carrying people from one safe area to another safe area,'" the Congressman said of the notoriously underperforming program. "The problem here is that we keep buying these \$120 million 'trucks' in the hopes that one day, they become military jets. It's not going to happen. It seems to me that if the Republican Party spent more time eliminating turkeys like the V-22, maybe cutting domestic programs that sustain our most important and vulnerable citizens wouldn't have been the only way to keep their campaign promises."

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